(a) whether the crops such as wheat, pulses, oilseeds and cotton are anticipated to show negative growth rate this year as compared to last year;

(b) measures proposed to be taken in this regard; and

(c) whether Government proposed to offset the shortfall in the production of these crops?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) As per the assessment made in January, 2000, the prospects of production of wheat, oilseeds, pulses and cotton were expected to be lower than last year. However, prospects for certain crops have since improved, due to favourable weather during the past two months.

(b) and (c) Assessment of the concurrent crops prospects is a regular exercise. Whereever necessary discussions are also held with the State Governments to assess specific requirements for taking contingency measures on input supply & crop protection. The Government is also implementing various crop specific schemes/ programmes to increase their production and productivity such as:

— Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Wheat Based Cropping System (ICDP-Wheat).

— National Pulses Development Project.

— Oilseeds Production Programme (OPP).

— Intensive Cotton Development Programme (ICDP).

Prices of Coconut Oil and Copra

1522. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the steep fall in the prices of coconut oil and copra between November, 1999 and February, 2000 affecting the coconut growers in the Kerala State very badly;

(b) whether it is a fact that the minimum support price for copra for the year 2000 has not yet been announced though the procurement season starts during the first week of December every year; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken to announce a remunerative

minimum support price for copra at the earliest and for market intervention by NAFED to arrest the fall in prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) Yes, Sir. Though the market prices of copra and coconut oil have shown a declining trend, yet the prices of ball copra and milling copra, are ruling above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed for 1999 season.

(b) and (c) The Minimum Support Price (MSP) for copra for the year 2000 is under active consideration of the Government and is expected to be announced shortly. Since copra is covered under the M.S.P. scheme, NAFED is required to intervene and start procuring as soon as the market prices touch the M.S.P. level.

Integrated Development of Horticulture

1523. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to launch a technology mission for integrated development of horticulture in the north-east;

(b) if so, whether the mission has been finalised and the main features of the mission;

(c) by when, it is likely to be launched;

(d) whether the mission also provides for development of infrastructure in the north-east; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) to (e) The Government proposes to launch a Technology Mission for the integrated development of Horticulture. The mission envisages the development of infrastructure facilities like nursery, tissue culture units, markets, cold storage, processing and transport facilities for the development of horticulture in the region. The Mission document is at an advanced stage of finalisation and the mission is likely to be launched soon.